

Low Head Circumference

**Definition/
cut-off value**

<5th percentile head circumference based on National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) growth charts.

**Participant
category and
priority level**
Category

Infants

Priority

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Justification

Low head circumference (LHC) is related to a variety of genetic, nutrition, and health factors. Head size is also related to socioeconomic status, and the relationship is mediated in part by nutrition factors. Abnormal LHC is indicative of future nutrition and health risk, particularly poor neurocognitive abilities. LHC is associated with LBW and is a strong predictor of growth retardation and other dimensions of growth and development.

**Clarifications/
Guidelines**

WIC staff WILL NOT be measuring head circumference and are not required to plot this information on the growth chart when documentation is provided. Accept referrals and use this risk condition if valid documentation from appropriate medical professional is provided, and/or if you are a clinic that is associated with a pediatric clinic that performs this measurement. File documentation in the participant's chart.

References

1. Institute of Medicine: WIC Nutrition Risk Criteria: A Scientific Assessment; 1996; pp. 73-79.
2. Hamill, PVV, Drizard, TA, et al.: Physical Growth: National Center for Health Statistics Percentiles; American Journal Clin. Nutr.; 1979; 32:607-629.